Second Chances

Year 6 reading comprehension (story). Read the text carefully. The questions are on the next page.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Jamal had rehearsed the apology so many times that the words had worn smooth, like pebbles in a pocket. Sorry I said your drawing was babyish. Sorry I laughed when the others did. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry.

The problem was that Ewan had not spoken to him for eleven days, and every one of those days had made the pebbles heavier.

They had been friends since Reception, when Ewan had shared his raisins on the first morning and Jamal had shown him how to hang upside down on the climbing frame. In Year 6, though, things had become more complicated. Jamal had started sitting with Marcus and the others at lunch, and Marcus had a way of turning everything into a joke. Somehow, when Ewan held up the comic he had spent all half-term drawing, Jamal had heard himself say the word. Babyish. The laughter had come at once, loud and pleased with itself. Ewan had folded the comic in half and walked away without a word.

Now, on the last afternoon before the school trip, Mrs Okafor read out the coach seating plan. “Jamal, you’ll be sitting with Ewan.”

Marcus snorted. Jamal felt the back of his neck burn.

On the coach, Ewan stared out of the window as if the motorway were the most fascinating thing in the world. Jamal looked at his hands. Twenty minutes passed. Thirty. Somewhere near the services, he reached into his bag and pulled out a crumpled sheet of paper.

“I tried to draw the next bit,” he said. “Of your comic. The part where the robot finds the door.” He held it out. “It’s terrible.”

Ewan looked at it for a long moment. The robot had too many arms and the door was wonky. “It is terrible,” Ewan agreed. Then, very slightly, the corner of his mouth twitched. “You’ve drawn its feet backwards.”

“I know.”

Ewan took the pencil from behind his ear. “Here,” he said. “I’ll show you.”

Questions: Second Chances

Tick one answer for each question. You can look back at the text as often as you like.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. **“the words had worn smooth, like pebbles in a pocket”. What does this simile suggest?**
   - ☐ Jamal collected pebbles.
   - ☐ Jamal had gone over the apology in his head again and again.
   - ☐ Jamal had written the apology on a stone.
   - ☐ The apology was very short.

2. **Why did the “pebbles” become heavier each day?**
   - ☐ Ewan gave him more pebbles.
   - ☐ He kept adding stones to his pocket.
   - ☐ His school bag was getting fuller.
   - ☐ The longer he waited, the harder it felt to apologise.

3. **Why did Jamal call the comic “babyish”?**
   - ☐ Ewan asked for his honest opinion.
   - ☐ He really thought the comic was bad.
   - ☐ He was trying to fit in with Marcus and the others.
   - ☐ Mrs Okafor told him to.

4. **“Jamal felt the back of his neck burn.” This shows that he felt…**
   - ☐ embarrassed
   - ☐ excited
   - ☐ ill
   - ☐ sunburnt

5. **Why does Jamal draw the next part of the comic instead of only saying sorry?**
   - ☐ because he wants to become an artist
   - ☐ because Mrs Okafor asked him to
   - ☐ to make fun of Ewan again
   - ☐ to show that he values Ewan’s comic after all

6. **Which moment shows that Ewan is starting to forgive Jamal?**
   - ☐ Ewan folded the comic in half
   - ☐ Ewan stared out of the window
   - ☐ Marcus snorted
   - ☐ the corner of his mouth twitched

Questions: Second Chances

Continued.

Name: _____ Date: _____

7. **What is the main theme of the story?**

- [ ] a school trip that goes wrong
- [ ] friendship and putting things right
- [ ] how robots are built
- [ ] winning a competition

Answer key: Second Chances

The correct answer for each question, with the evidence from the text.

1. **“the words had worn smooth, like pebbles in a pocket”. What does this simile suggest?**

   Jamal had gone over the apology in his head again and again.

   Why: Pebbles become smooth by being handled over and over, just as the words had been repeated many times.

2. **Why did the “pebbles” become heavier each day?**

   The longer he waited, the harder it felt to apologise.

   Why: The pebbles stand for the apology; each silent day made saying it feel harder.

3. **Why did Jamal call the comic “babyish”?**

   He was trying to fit in with Marcus and the others.

   Why: He had started sitting with Marcus, who turned everything into a joke, and he “heard himself” say it, as if he did not really mean it.

4. **“Jamal felt the back of his neck burn.” This shows that he felt…**

   embarrassed

   Why: A burning neck is a sign of embarrassment, here caused by Marcus snorting at the seating plan.

5. **Why does Jamal draw the next part of the comic instead of only saying sorry?**

   to show that he values Ewan’s comic after all

   Why: Carrying on the story shows he took the comic seriously, which undoes the word “babyish”.

6. **Which moment shows that Ewan is starting to forgive Jamal?**

   the corner of his mouth twitched

   Why: The twitch is the beginning of a smile, and next he offers to show Jamal how to draw.

7. **What is the main theme of the story?**

   friendship and putting things right

   Why: The story is about hurting a friend and finding a way to make amends.